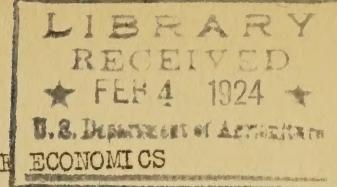


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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

U. S. Department of Agriculture
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DEVELOPING A LONG-TIME STATE PROGRAM.*

J. R. Hutcheson, Extension Director, Virginia.

The idea of trying to work out a long-time State program in Virginia is a direct result of the establishment of the Virginia Agricultural Advisory Committee. About two years ago, when the leaders of the various farm organizations were discussing the matter of bringing about closer cooperation between the farm organizations, it was suggested that a conference be called at the State agricultural college to which should be invited one representative of every farm organization in the State, a representative from each agricultural institution of the State, such as the State department of agriculture, or the State division of markets, one representative from the agricultural press, one representative from the agricultural departments of railroads, and one representative from the agricultural committee of the State bankers' association.

This conference was called by the director of agricultural extension work at the college, and it was well attended. After considerable discussion, it was decided that an organization should be formed known as the Virginia Agricultural Advisory Committee with the director of extension work as chairman. The chief purpose of this committee for the first year was to offer guidance and assistance to the new cooperative-marketing associations that were being organized in the State. The new associations were invited to bring their plans of organization before the committee and discuss them at length so as to get the advice and assistance of all organizations already functioning in the State. During the year the poultry producers, the fruit growers, and the seed growers submitted their plans and received material assistance.

At the beginning of the second year, at the annual meeting of the advisory committee, it was decided that the committee had been of so much service that its sphere of usefulness should be enlarged. In talking over the various things that might be attempted it was finally decided that perhaps the greatest need of Virginia's agriculture at the present time was a long-time program that could be supported by every agency in the State interested in the agricultural development of the State. Prior to this time, every organization and institution had its own program which it attempted to carry out in the best possible way without any particular thought

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of just how its program affected the programs of the other organizations and institutions. It was believed that if a carefully worked out long-time program could be developed with the assistance of the agricultural institutions and organizations such a program would do much to bring about closer cooperation between these organizations, for such a program would be a program for the development of Virginia's agriculture rather than a program belonging to any particular organization or institution. After very careful consideration and after every member of the advisory committee had been given an opportunity to express himself a vote was taken, and it was unanimously decided that the agricultural advisory committee should attempt to work out a five-year agricultural program for the State during the present year.

However, it was decided that such a program to have any practical value would have to be based on real investigation and study of present conditions in the State. In order to make this study, the chairman appointed a strong committee on each of the following subjects: crops and soils, dairying, poultry, swine, beef cattle, sheep, horticulture, truck crops, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics, agricultural education, agricultural investigation, and rural home development. The chairman appointed for each committee was a man in the State who was especially interested in the subject concerned and was usually an officer of some association which had for its purpose the development of that particular phase of agriculture. For instance, the chairman of the dairy committee was president of the State dairymen's association, and the chairman of the poultry committee was president of the State poultry association. The secretary of each committee was usually head of one of the college departments. For instance, the secretary of the crops and soils committee was head of the agronomy department, and the secretary of the swine committee was head of the animal husbandry department. The other members of the committee were farmers, extension workers, and investigators who were particularly interested in the special work of the committee. Care was taken to see that all farm organizations directly interested were represented on committees. Much care was given to the selection and appointment of committees, and the above plan was followed because we wanted the final recommendations of the committees to be not only a program for extension workers but also a program for each farm organization in the State. College men were appointed as secretaries of the committees so that we should be in a position to see that the committee really worked and functioned, and so that the committee would have the benefit of the investigation and other work which has been done at the colleges and in the Department of Agriculture.

These committees have now been at work for about four months, and most of them have made a real study of the subjects assigned to them. They are all rapidly coming to the conclusion that more study will be needed before they can finally make their reports. They see that the job is a big one and a much-needed one. We thought, at first, that final reports could be submitted some time in January in time for the 1924 program, but it now looks as if we shall be doing well to get the program completed by the middle of the coming summer.

In addition to the state-wide program which we hope can be made from the reports of the various subject-matter committees we are having the county farm and home demonstration agents in each of the counties where they work to meet with their advisory committees and plan a five-year agricultural program for the individual counties. The agents are being furnished with all the available census statistics and are supplementing these with surveys which they are making in their counties.

Although our long-time program is yet in the experimental stage, we have gone far enough to become firmly convinced that the efforts we are making will be well worth while even if we get no more than 10 per cent efficiency for the first two or three years. The study which the committees and the county agents are giving to the subject would amply repay us for the time spent even if we did not ultimately work out a program on which we could all agree. We firmly believe that we are going to work out a program that will be of great service to the agriculture of Virginia.

